

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Prairie County Conservation District  
Fallon Crossing LLC  
PO Box 622  
Terry, MT 59349
2. Type of action: Authorization for Change No. 42M 30027593
3. Water source name: Yellowstone River
4. Location affected by project: S½ Sec. 23, T13N, R 52E and NW¼ Sec. 26, T13N, R52E
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:  
Fallon Crossing LLC is requesting to use reserved water allocated to the Prairie County Conservation District. The proposed project consists of a pump site from the Yellowstone River in the SESWNW of Section 26, Township 13 North, Range 52 East Prairie County to be used for sprinkler irrigation of approximately 100 acres in Sections 23 and 26, Township 13 North, Range 52 East, Prairie County. **The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.**
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)  
Montana Natural Heritage Program  
Montana Historic Preservation Office  
Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (MFWP)  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)  
Prairie County Planning Office

**Part II. Environmental Review**

**1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Water quantity** - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

*Determination:* The Yellowstone River in this area is not on the MFWP list of chronically or periodically dewatered streams. This stream does experience periods of low flow, but is generally a fairly reliable stream in this area. There should be no significant impact from this proposed use.

**Water quality** - *Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

*Determination:* The Yellowstone River below Cherry Creek is not on the MDEQ list of water quality impaired streams. There should be no return flows to the stream from runoff. There should be no significant impact to water quality from this proposed use.

**Groundwater** - *Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

*Determination:* This proposed use of water should have no significant impact on groundwater quality or quantity in the area.

**DIVERSION WORKS** - *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

*Determination:* The applicant proposes to use a 30 HP Cornell 4RB centrifugal pump on trailer direct coupled to an electric motor speed at 1150 gpm and 1775 rpm. The proposed booster pump will be a 30 HP Cornell 2.5 YHB speed at 400 gpm and 3525 rpm. From the river pump the applicant proposes 1300 ft. of 12 inch PVC mainline to the 1<sup>st</sup> pivot then 1250 ft. of 10 inch PVC mainline to a booster pump. From the booster pump there will be 2050 ft. of 8 inch mainline to the 58 acre pivot.

#### **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**Endangered and threatened species** - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

*Determination:* The Montana Natural Heritage Program has identified nine endangered species or species of special concern and one ecological site within the project area. There is potential for impact on animal species and the ecological site in and near the project area.

**Wetlands** - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

*Determination:* The area of proposed use does not appear to be a wetland area. There should be no significant impact to wetlands in the area.

**Ponds** - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

*Determination:* There are no ponds involved in this proposed project; there should be no significant impact to existing resources.

**GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE** - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

*Determination:* There should be no significant impact on soil quality, soil stability, or soil moisture content from this proposed use. There will be new land sprinkled that will increase the moisture content of that soil, but the irrigation will be designed to be applied at a rate that the plants will be able to use.

**VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS** - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

*Determination:* There will be much soil disturbance during construction of this project and there will be a possibility of some noxious weed spread and establishment

**AIR QUALITY** - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

*Determination:* There should be no significant deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

*Determination:* The Montana Historic Preservation Office identified two archeological or historic sites of record in the proposed project area. This proposed use of water has the potential to have impacts on these sites. A cultural resource inventory is recommended in order to determine whether or not sites exist and if they will be impacted.

**DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY** - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

*Determination:* There should be no significant impacts on other environmental resources of land, energy, and water from this proposed use.

<b>HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</b>
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**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

*Determination:* This proposed use is not inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goal for Prairie County.

**ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES** - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

*Determination:* There should be no significant impacts on recreational or wilderness activities from this proposed use.

**HUMAN HEALTH** - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

*Determination:* There should be no significant impact on human health from this proposed use.

**PRIVATE PROPERTY** - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

Yes\_\_\_ No X\_\_\_ *If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

**OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

*Impacts on:*

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No Significant Impact
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No Significant Impact
- (c) Existing land uses? No Significant Impact
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No Significant Impact
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No Significant Impact
- (f) Demands for government services? No Significant Impact
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No Significant Impact
- (h) Utilities? No Significant Impact
- (i) Transportation? No Significant Impact
- (j) Safety? No Significant Impact
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No Significant Impact

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts Additional diversions in the Yellowstone River could cause and additional burden on the established irrigators and low flows in the river affecting aquatic life. This proposed use is not expected to have a significant affect on the river system at this time. The secondary and cumulative impacts are not expected to be significant.

Cumulative Impacts Above

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** Fallon Crossing LLC would be required to cease their diversion of water if the water rights of senior appropriators downstream were being adversely impacted.
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** The no action alternative would mean that Fallon Crossing LLC would not be able to use water from the Yellowstone River and would not be able to irrigate this acreage and not be able to increase the value of the property.

***PART III. Conclusion***

1. ***Preferred Alternative*** Grant the Application for Change Authorization
2. ***Comments and Responses*** A cultural resource inventory is recommended for this site.
3. ***Finding:***  
Yes \_\_\_ No X Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

*If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:* No Significant adverse environmental impacts were identified. No EIS is required.

*Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:*

*Name:* Christine Smith  
*Title:* Water Resource Specialist  
*Date:* 06/13/2007